

Western Organizing Review

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Energy Prices Spur Talk of Synfuels

Coal-to-Diesel Plants Proposed in Montana

Record energy prices have prompted calls for massive coal-based energy development in a flash-back to schemes that were tried, and failed, in the 1970's and 1980's.

Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer is promoting expanded stripmining of Montana coal and a string of synthetic fuels plants that would turn the coal into diesel, as an alternative to imported oil.

“Without adequate safeguards and the application of new technologies,” Northern Plains Resource Council’s Helen Waller said in a letter to Governor Schweitzer, “expanded coal development will have an overall negative impact on our land, air, water, wildlife and communities.”

The only commercial-scale coal-to-liquids plants in the world are operated by Sasol, a South African



PHOTO COURTESY NORTHERN PLAINS

Sasol units II and III in South Africa.

corporation with its roots in the apartheid era. Synfuels proponents point to Sasol to show fuel can be made from coal, but Sasol is converting its operations to use natural

“Synfuels” continued on page 13

Captive Supply Reform Act Introduced in House

WORC’s campaign to break the meatpackers’ stranglehold on the livestock industry took another step forward when Congressman Pomeroy (D-ND) introduced the Captive Supply Reform Act in the House on November 8, 2005. H.R. 4257 is a companion bill to S.960 which would

- Require a fixed base price on contracts and marketing agreements and
- Require that contracts be traded in open, public markets.

Representatives Barbara Cubin (R-WY) and Stephanie Herseth (D-SD) were among the first representatives to co-sign this important legislation.

“Meatpackers are obtaining a very large percentage of cattle and hogs they slaughter through arrangements know as ‘captive supplies’—livestock that packers either own themselves or control through contracts with farmers and ranchers,” said Roger Brenna, Dakota Resource Council Vice-Chair.

WORC hopes to move this legislation forward in this Congressional session. This House legislation along with WORC’s recent letter to Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Saxby Chambliss (R-GA) asking for a Committee hearing on the Act are two positive steps.

“Congress should pass this bill and restore competition to our cattle and hog markets,” said Brenna. “We urge farmers and ranchers to contact their Congressional delegates and ask them to support the Captive Supply Reform Act.”

For more information about the Captive Supply Reform Act and what you can do to move this important legislation forward log on to www.worc.org.

—Jeri Lynn Bakken

For more information about the Captive Supply Reform Act see page 14. For what you can do to move this important legislation forward go to www.worc.org.

Western Organizing Review

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WORC is a regional network of seven grassroots community organizations that include 9,500 members and 49 local chapters. WORC helps its member groups succeed by coordinating regional issue campaigns.

Celebrating 25 Years of Grassroots Leadership and Action

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Chair's Column

by **Dena Hoff**

There is a very old saying that goes, "Curses are blessings, and blessings are curses." I have always taken this to mean, "Be careful what you wish for, and keep your eyes open for opportunities you can use to strengthen your position."

2005 has been a year of crazy events in our WORC states, our country, and our world. To people who use logic and commonsense when working through everyday problems, the convoluted, misguided, and often incomprehensible approaches taken by key decision makers to major problems has to make us wonder if we are lost in a science fiction film.

When we are trying to fix a piece of equipment, and the bolt doesn't fit, we go back to the shop and find one that does. We know that in the long run, if we don't fix it right, our problem will only get worse. Everyday we watch as decision makers try to force the wrong bolt, using the wrong tools, into the wrong place for a quick fix, that we can see is going to cause a major breakdown with major consequences for most of us.

If we keep sound principles as the underpinning of our work, principles which are visionary and long term, we will be thinking hard about the right bolts and the right tools to "fix" whatever needs fixing for the long haul, and hopefully, have the sense to leave things that do work alone.

I like to think that all of us in the WORC groups are hardworking problem solvers who have this sound grounding in vision and principles. I believe these principles come from shared values. We want a better world for everyone. We are not part of the "too much is not enough" crowd who use the world and everything in it as a giant Monopoly game for personal gain.

Although money is often in short supply for our work, we understand that money alone will not help us build the kind of just and equitable world we want to live in. Our 25 years of successes and struggles have show us that fighting one defensive battle after another is exhausting, expensive, and demoralizing when we have a setback.

Though we sometimes feel discouraged by the slow crawl of progress on our issues, we should be proud that our vision and commitment to doing the right thing has had an effect we cannot always see.



Unlike many other groups, we have always known that grassroots organizing is the long-term fix for society's problems. By steadily holding the grassroots course, we are slowly building a broad-based consensus through personal contact offering workable solutions to our neighbors' concerns.

When the tide of public opinion turns our way, we will be ready to use this momentum to affect positive change because we have not failed in our commitment to our principles.

2005 has been a long year. But it has been a privilege to have been your chair this past year. I value the time I have spent with you as individuals and as a group. Relax, spend time with people you love, enjoy the holidays, and rest up. 2006 will soon be here, and we need lots of energy for the new challenges and opportunities we will surely encounter.

Happy holidays to you and your families.

Dena Hoff is the Chair of WORC. She and her husband operate a farm near Glendive, Montana.

Bits & Pieces

North Dakota farmers sue over wheat checkoff

The **Dakota Resource Council**, North Dakota Farmers Union, and four farmers are suing the state of North Dakota for an unconstitutional directed funding of two trade associations. The action seeks to stop a 1.5 cents-per-bushel wheat checkoff levy paid directly to the North Dakota Grain Growers Association and U.S. Durum Growers Association by growers. The suit contends direct funding to the two private organizations violates the state constitution prohibitions against

- Giving money directly to any entity or person except for support of the poor or economic development;
- Special laws affecting only specified groups or persons; and
- Providing special benefits or privileges to only a few while excluding others.

“It’s a question of accountability,” said DRC Chair Dean Hulse. “Farmers who pay this tax deserve a say in how it is spent.”

Oregon Rural Action wants fair treatment of spanish-speaking citizens

Oregon Rural Action’s Snake River Chapter is working to get Malheur County to provide more information in Spanish to clients of the Parole and Probation Department who speak only Spanish or have limited proficiency in English. No staff person in the Department speaks Spanish and the Department expects clients to bring translators, which many cannot afford to hire. Local attorneys contend clients have problems understanding the charges filed against them and the disposition and terms of their probation because information is provided to clients in a language other than the one they speak, read, or otherwise understand.

Western Colorado Congress holds 25th Annual Meeting

Two hundred people celebrated a quarter century of grassroots activism at the **Western Colorado Congress 25th Annual Meeting** on October 8th in Grand



PHOTO COURTESY WESTERN COLORADO CONGRESS

Author and former Texas Agriculture Commissioner, Jim Hightower speaks at Western Colorado Congress’ 25th Annual Meeting.

Junction. Featured speakers included Lois Gibbs, Love Canal activist and founder of the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, and Jim Hightower, author, radio commentator and former Texas Agriculture Commissioner. Members passed a by-law change to add two more at-large members to the board and filled the new positions with Peggy Rawlins of Grand Junction and Curtis Imrie of Buena Vista. Peter Crowell of Montrose was elected WCC secretary and Andrea Robinsong of Hotchkiss was re-elected as WCC vice-president. Gene Goffin of Crawford and Larry Mosher of Crested Butte were re-elected as at-large members of the board. A panel of past presidents reflected on WCC’s achievements and challenges over the past 25 years. WCC presented the Chuck Worley Award for enduring activism to Peggy Utesch of New Castle to honor her work on behalf of western Colorado’s gas field residents.

Powder River Basin Resource Council wins revised Environmental Assessment of Beartooth Front

Action by the Clark Resource Council, an affiliate of the **Powder River Basin Resource Council**, convinced the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to revise an Environmental Assessment to “gain more public comment” on proposed seismic testing along

the Beartooth Front. The group expects the revision to consider vehicle use on delicate terrain within the proposed exploration area and winter wildlife habitat. An editorial on the BLM decision by the Cody Enterprise stated, "This victory...is a testament to the Clark Resource Council and its tenacious efforts to protect that portion of the Beartooth Front."

Dakota Rural Action calls for moratorium on factory farms

In an effort to stop the most recent dairy factory farm, **Dakota Rural Action's** Moody County Chapter has called for a moratorium on all new factory farms in Moody County, convinced a county commissioner to recuse himself from the vote, circulated petitions to initiate changes to the zoning ordinance and kept the heat up in weekly letters to the editor. The commission has denied citizens the right to hold a vote on initiated ordinance changes, so the chapter has filed suit in circuit court to force the commission to do so. In other efforts, the chapter has written to 10 federal agencies calling for an Environmental Impact Study (EIS) on the impact of huge dairies in the nine-county dairy development region in South Dakota. And a new ally, the Santee Sioux Tribe, has joined the chapter's efforts by calling for an EIS on tribal land in Moody County.



Paul Hawks of Cottonwood Resource Council, an affiliate of Northern Plains Resource Council, and Bruce Gilbert of Stillwater Mining Company. Northern Plains celebrated the 5th Anniversary of the Good Neighbor Agreement in September.

WORC Calendar 2005 - 2006

WORC Board and Staff Meeting

Billings, Montana December 1-3, 2005

WORC Board and Staff Meeting

Ontario, Oregon.....June 8-10, 2006

Principles of Community Organizing Training

Billings, Montana June 21-24, 2006

Advanced Community Organizing Training

Billings, MontanaJuly 20-22, 2006

Principles of Community Organizing Training

Fargo, North DakotaSeptember 16-19, 2006

WORC Board and Staff Meeting

Billings, Montana December 7-9, 2006

Idaho Rural Council files protest of Twin Falls factory farm water transfer

Idaho Rural Council has filed a protest of a water transfer to an approximately 2,500 animal-unit factory farm in Twin Falls County. In other news, the Elmore County Commissioners have placed a moratorium on factory farms and have held meetings twice a month to develop factory farm ordinances. On the clean energy front, the Idaho Farm Bureau has asked for IRC's support of legislation to set a "renewable fuel standard" in Idaho.

Northern Plains celebrates 5th Anniversary of Good Neighbor Agreement

The **Northern Plains Resource Council** and its affiliates, Cottonwood Resource Council and Stillwater Protective Association, celebrated the fifth anniversary of the Good Neighbor Agreement at the Hobble Diamond Ranch near Greycliff, Montana, in late September. The Good Neighbor Agreement is a partnership between the three groups and the Stillwater Mining Company, which operates two platinum/palladium mines in the area. The agreement is designed to protect the area's quality of life, while providing for responsible economic development.

Costs of Roundup Ready Wheat Are Greater Than Benefits

New WORC study shows wheat industry could lose \$272 Million

WORC's new report shows that the introduction of genetically modified wheat would lower income for wheat growers and the wheat industry.

Harvest at Risk – Impacts of Roundup Ready Wheat in the Northern Great Plains examines the likely consequences of Roundup Ready wheat adoption and projects economic impacts on wheat growers and the wheat industry.

“This is a technology for which there is really no compelling need,” said Dr. Charles Benbrook, author of the study. “Existing weed management systems are stable, the price of weed management is not increasing, and farmers are managing resistance to currently used herbicides.”

If Roundup Ready wheat is introduced, increased seed and herbicide costs and reduced wheat prices would outweigh the operating cost savings from Roundup Ready wheat's simplified weed management by as much as \$37 per acre, the report concludes. Farmers who do not plant Roundup Ready wheat would also face increased costs and lower income, ranging from \$5.60 to \$18 per acre.

“This is a technology for which there is really no compelling need.”

— Dr. Charles Benbrook, author

“Overall, the wheat industry could lose \$94 million to \$272 million,” Benbrook said.

Benbrook said the wheat industry needs an in-depth and independent study of the factors and impacts of GM wheat so that the technology does not reduce farm income in the long run.



“I don't see any advantage to the farmer in the introduction of Roundup Ready wheat,” said Todd Leake, a wheat grower and spokesperson for the Dakota Resource Council.

The report finds mostly negative affects from nine factors affecting the costs and benefits of growing Roundup Ready wheat: emergence of resistance, gene flow, disease pressure and related problems, impacts on seed plus herbicide expenditures, market rejection, dockage, yields, grain quality, and wheat prices.

An earlier report by WORC, *Market Risks of Roundup Ready Wheat*, found that introduction of genetically modified wheat in the U.S. risks the loss of one-fourth to one-half of U.S. hard red spring and durum wheat export markets and up to a one-third drop in price.

“There are other unanswered questions about the impacts on soil and water and human and animal health that should be studied,” Hoff said. “We're going to have to work together so that we don't put our harvest at risk,” said Dena Hoff, WORC Chair, and member of the Northern Plains Resource Council.

—Kevin Dowling

Congress Denies Producers and Consumers the Right to Know

Country-of-Origin Labeling delayed until September 2008

Congress has voted against the will of agriculture producers and consumers across the country. Through the Agriculture Appropriations process, Congress adopted an additional two-year delay for the implementation of mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling for all products except seafood. Mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling, originally scheduled to go into effect in 2004, will now be postponed until September 2008.

The delay is a repeat of history. Once again, Country-of-Origin Labeling has been delayed with no public debate and no floor vote on the specific provision. The decision was made in conference committee, behind closed doors.

The 2002 Farm Bill requires mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling of beef, lamb, pork, fish, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, and peanuts. The label, found on foods sold in grocery stores, would state the food's country of origin.

This postponement was doubly disappointing as the decision to delay mandatory labeling until September 2008 was made in secret with just a few Congressmen making the final decision. Although WORC state senators such as Enzi (R-Wyoming), Thomas (R-Wyoming), Burns (R-Montana), Baucus (D-Montana), Johnson (D-South Dakota), Thune (R-South Dakota) and Dorgan (D-North Dakota) voted against the final bill because of the Country-of-Origin Labeling provisions, the final bill passed 82 to 18.

—Jeri Lynn Bakken

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- Billings, Montana June 21-24, 2006
- Fargo, North Dakota. September 16-19, 2006

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Bipartisan Bill Seeks to Reform Mining Law

Representatives Nick Rahall (D-WV), Chris Shays (R-CT), and Jay Inslee (D-WA) have reintroduced legislation to reform the 1872 Mining Law.

The Federal Mineral Development and Land Protection Equity Act of 2005, HR 3968, would end the continued give-away of public lands. It would require mining operations to pay a hold fee for use of the land and a royalty on the production of valuable minerals, such as gold and silver, extracted from western federal lands. The bill would require industry to comply with some basic reclamation standards to ensure long-term protection of the environment both during mining and after it has been completed.

Rahall has introduced similar legislation previously. This legislation is different because it recognizes that special places, often sacred sites, should be off-limits to hardrock mining as its centerpiece.

The reform proposal also recognizes that there are other special places in the United States with spectacular natural resources and values that should be protected from the unavoidable, and often irreversible, damage caused by hardrock mining.

Under the current mining law, the federal government has given away over \$245 billion in mineral rich public lands. In return, the mining industry has left taxpayers with a cleanup bill estimated in 1993 in the range of \$32 to \$72 billion for hundreds of thousands of abandoned mines that pollute the Western landscape, including 40 percent of the headwaters of Western waterways.

The purpose of the 1872 Mining Law was to entice settlers to the West. The law allows miners to buy federal land for \$2.50 to \$5.00 an acre. These price tags remain in effect today after 133 years.

—Kevin Dowling

Harmful Provisions on Use of Public Lands in Budget Bill

The Senate passed its budget bill (known as a reconciliation bill) in late October that includes drilling in the Arctic Refuge, but none of the other bad oil and gas provisions that were expected.

On November 10, the House passed its budget bill that doesn't include drilling in the Arctic Refuge, but does include provisions that would open up millions of acres of public lands for sale to mining interests.

Since 1994, Congress has banned the "patenting" or sale of federal lands containing hard rock mineral deposits. Subtitle B of the House Resources Committee's reconciliation bill would revive this practice by allowing mining companies and others to "patent" mining claims on public lands for \$1,000 per acre.

However, unlike the old 1872 Mining Law, which required claimants to prove that a valuable mineral

existed to obtain a patent, the committee's language eliminates that requirement. The provision therefore would allow claimants to obtain fee title to millions of acres of mining claims. In addition, the language requires the Secretary of the Interior to sell BLM and National Forest lands containing "mineral deposits" for \$1,000 per acre. It allows the mining industry to take title to public lands without regard for the value of the land for other uses and without full compensation to the federal treasury.

The House and Senate will convene a conference committee to work out the differences between the two bills. Opponents have mounted an intensive effort to develop joint strategies and lobby key members of Congress.

—Patty Larson

Volunteers Needed for Home on the Range

WORC and Northern Plains are transforming a vacant grocery store into an energy efficient office building. We held a groundbreaking celebration on September 12, and we've completed the interior demolition. Volunteers have dug up and recycled the old asphalt parking lot. More volunteers are now preparing the recycled wood from the old grocery store to use as baseboards and trim in the new office.

How You Can Help

Over the next several months, our new building will be a busy place. We have done as much as we can to trim costs, and part of this effort requires us to perform some of the work ourselves. This will save us tens of thousands of dollars, but we need your help to pull it off. Can you volunteer to help with any of these jobs during the course of construction (between now and March)? Do you know of a location in Billings we could use for much of the required off-site work?

Off-Site Work

- Framing up our light shelves, which involves light carpentry;
- Preparing wood for baseboards and trim using woodworking power tools;
- Refinishing doors, window frames, baseboards, and trim; and



Volunteers are helping WORC and Northern Plains cut the cost of the office building by tens of thousands of dollars.



Montana Lieutenant Governor, John Bolinger, spoke at WORC and Northern Plains' groundbreaking ceremony on September 12, 2005.

- Building our bike rack by cutting and welding metal into shape.

On-Site Work

- Caulking inside of the building to ensure proper weatherization by sealing all cracks and gaps;
- Installing computer cabling throughout the building;
- Landscaping next spring will include cleanup and weed control, as well as planting;
- Painting building exterior; and
- Final cleaning prior to moving in.

Most of these jobs don't require experience and we will have supervision for all the projects. Please let us know as soon as possible if you are interested in helping out with any of these projects.

To volunteer, please contact Tim Ennis at the WORC office (406.252.9672) or email him at tennis@worc.org.

—Steve Paulson, Northern Plains

Proposed Trade Agreements Pose Additional Threats to U.S.

Just a few short months ago, over 80% of the Senators and Representatives from WORC states supported American sovereignty by voting against the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Under extreme pressure, however, from the Bush Administration, CAFTA passed Congress by a couple of votes. Now, the same multinational corporate interests and the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) continue to push for additional trade pacts that use CAFTA's model. Two new trade agreements, the Andean Free Trade Agreement (AFTA) and the Thailand Free Trade Agreement are on the horizon.

Andean Free Trade Agreement

"AFTA involves Ecuador, Peru and Columbia. It contains the same dangerous provisions as CAFTA—and will cause similar economic damage," said Reed Kelley, WORC Trade Team Chair. "AFTA will open a whole new set of floodgates for the importation of foreign food, often produced under health, safety, environmental and labor standards far below those that apply to American producers."

Working families in neither the United States nor the Andean countries would benefit from AFTA. It is a step toward the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), which would extend the current faulty trade model to 31 additional countries and devastate farmers, ranchers and working communities throughout the Western Hemisphere. AFTA has dangerous ag-

"Trade agreements should not compromise the ability of U.S. farmers and ranchers to provide American consumers with safe, high-quality food. They must honor local, state and federal government duty to protect the health and safety of their citizens.

—Reed Kelly, Western Colorado Congress

The Andean Free Trade Agreement includes the same investor-to-state provisions as CAFTA and NAFTA.



ricultural impacts in its own right, but when coupled with CAFTA and viewed as vehicle to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the implications are truly onerous.

"Particularly, without U.S. implementation for mandatory Country-of-Origin Labeling for meat and produce, this trade agreement, like its predecessors, shortchanges producers and consumers alike.

World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference

On December 13-18, the World Trade Organization (WTO) will hold its 6th Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong, China.

WTO Ministers will negotiate on key global issues including agricultural reform, the future of public services, and poor countries' right to industrial development.

Decisions made in this conference could affect farmers and ranchers by passing international regulations that impact domestic farm policy such as farm subsidies and environmental incentives.

Consumers will not be able to choose food grown and processed in the United States over foreign foods,” said Kelley, who ranches near Meeker, Colorado.

“Trade agreements should not compromise the ability of U.S. farmers and ranchers to provide American consumers with safe, high-quality food. They must honor local, state and federal government duty to protect the health and safety of their citizens. AFTA does not meet these tests,” said Kelley.

Thailand Free Trade Agreement

The USTR is also in the final stages of negotiating a free trade agreement with Thailand. While the proposed text is not yet available, we know that the Thailand agreement will contain investor-to-state provisions just like NAFTA, CAFTA and AFTA.

Despite Thailand’s recent announcement that it will open some imports of U.S. beef into the Kingdom, the Thailand FTA poses big problems for other agricultural sectors like sugar and rice. According to the American Sugar Alliance, Thailand is the world’s third largest sugar exporting country overall. Thailand produces more than twice as much sugar as all the CAFTA countries combined and exports two and a half times more.

The U.S. corporations comprise Thailand’s second largest foreign investment, with cumulative interests of over \$16 billion, in manufacturing, petroleum and banking. Furthermore, the U.S. already had a trade deficit with Thailand of approximately \$11 billion in 2003.



To learn more about trade agreements and what WORC is doing to protect U.S. agriculture, visit www.worc.org.

Investor-to-State Provisions

AFTA and the Thailand Free Trade Agreement contain the same investor-to-state language as NAFTA and CAFTA. These agreements permit foreign companies to sue local, state and national governments over laws protecting the health and safety of citizens and their families.

Under this provision, three appointed arbiters decide if corporate profits are jeopardized by the health and safety rules of citizens. This provision overrides our judicial system. To date, 42 cases have been filed by corporate interests and investors under NAFTA’s Chapter 11 investor provisions in all three NAFTA countries.

With only 12 of the 42 cases finalized, over \$35 million in NAFTA countries’ taxpayer funds have been granted to five corporations.

Seven additional cases against the U.S. are currently in active arbitration. Among the pending NAFTA cases is a \$300 million challenge, mounted by Canadian feed lot operators against the U.S. decision to close the border to Canadian cattle because of the threat of mad cow disease.

The agreement may also meet with strong opposition yet in Thailand due to its potential impact on Thai sovereignty. The FTA may require restructuring of Thai laws that have traditionally restricted foreign ownership of property.

“It’s no wonder that some countries are awaking to the forced reality of these Bush Administration FTAs, like we’ve seen in the recent meetings in Argentina, when Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez referred to the U.S. as the ‘American Imperialists.’ I doubt most of us really want to continue this image of our country,” said Kelley.

—Jeri Lynn Bakken

Beef Checkoff Lawsuit Dropped

Statement by Steve and Jeanne Charter

Editor's Note: On October 19, Northern Plains' members, Steve and Jeanne Charter, asked that federal court dismiss their lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture, ending their eight-year fight against the mandatory beef checkoff program. The following is the statement the Charters released on October 20.

We have decided to drop our Beef Checkoff lawsuit on advice that to continue on would be both very expensive and futile. The motion to dismiss was filed yesterday.

Never mind that the program has always been (and still is) promoted as producer-controlled, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled last spring that the Beef Checkoff is a "targeted tax" to fund "the government's own speech". This means the federal bureaucracy is free to shape the program to benefit whatever interests it favors within the industry.

This seems to mean there is no legal recourse left against the way USDA handed effective control of the Checkoff over to the big-business-dominated National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) in 1997. Since then, every Checkoff dollar collected has increased NCBA's influence and power to work against independent cattlemen's interests and for packer, processor and big feeder advantage. It looks like we are stuck with a Checkoff that has been corrupted into a private "NCBA Tax", with USDA serving as their enforcer.

We find it deeply humiliating to be forced to submit and "pay tribute" to NCBA like this. Every Checkoff payment, every deceptive ad that pretends the program is producer-controlled, every conglomerate-friendly grant contract is a bitter reminder of NCBA's quasi-governmental power and our own subservient status in today's cattle industry. And it is only going to get worse until people unite to end this frightening merger of bureaucracy and big business. No market or trade reforms will succeed while NCBA is in the driver's seat. The recent push for a "privatized" national animal ID program is yet another trick to concentrate even more money and power with NCBA.

Some cattlemen are calling for a new Beef Checkoff referendum. We frankly feel another petition drive would be an exercise in futility, given the way USDA's unfair



procedures threw out thousands of bona fide producer signatures to disqualify the livestock auctions' heroic petition effort in 2001. Worse yet, USDA is under no obligation to honor a vote. No bureaucracy is going to give up this extraordinary power to tax and control that even escapes congressional budget oversight! The only way we see to end the "NCBA Tax" is to get Congress to understand what a big racket these Checkoffs have become and to win flat out repeal of the federal enabling legislation.

We would like to publicly express our thanks for the moral and financial support so many people have given us over the last eight years in this piece of the on-going struggle for an independent, competitive bid cattle industry. We look forward to fighting beside you again in the battles to come.

Steve and Jeanne Charter ranch near Shepherd, Montana.

“Synfuels” continued from cover

gas because of the environmental costs of using coal. Sasol recently built a \$1.2 billion pipeline to bring natural gas from Mozambique to its synfuels plants.

More Dinosaurs on the Plains?

Proponents estimate the break-even cost for a coal to-diesel plant at \$30 - \$40 dollars per barrel. They say that at current world oil prices, such a plant would be profitable. The history of U.S. synfuels economics is not so rosy. Billions in federal synfuels subsidies were squandered in the 1980's, and Colorado's oil shale boom turned to bust overnight.

The \$2.1 billion Dakota Gasification Plant in Beulah, North Dakota is the only commercial scale synfuels plant built. It was built with federal loan and price guarantees, but it still went bankrupt after operating for one year. The Department of Energy operated



Sasol units II and III in South Africa.

PHOTO COURTESY NORTHERN PLAINS

it at a loss for a few years, and then sold it for pennies on the dollar (\$85 million) to Basin Electric. Even at today's high natural gas prices, the plant is only profitable because U.S. taxpayers paid virtually all the construction costs.

Sasol's plants in South Africa spew hundreds of thousands of tons of sulfur dioxide, hydrogen sulfide, nitrogen oxides, and volatile organic compounds each year. They produce huge volumes of slag and hazardous solid wastes. Synfuels plants require huge volumes of water, a fatal problem for past synfuels proposals in the parched Northern Great Plains. Hundreds of square miles could be stripmined and turned into diesel without making a dent in U.S. dependence on foreign oil.

Sasol's plants are the largest single source of greenhouse gases in the world. The technology to capture and sequester carbon dioxide from synfuels plants is still being developed and unproven. The experts can't estimate how much it might cost.

The Northern Plains Resource Council is asking Governor Schweitzer to promote local biofuel plants and small-scale wind and solar projects instead of synfuels plants. The group argues that renewable energy facilities can be built much sooner, much cheaper, have more local economic benefit and have much less environmental impact.

—John Smillie

How You Can Stop 505 Tons of CO₂

Invest in WORC's energy future

WORC and Northern Plains are installing 4,700 solar cells in Home on the Range, our new office building. The solar cells will generate half of the electricity needed to power our computers, copier, appliances, lights, and other equipment. By generating electricity from the sun rather than from western coal, we keep 505 tons of carbon dioxide out of the air over 30 years.

Won't you help by investing in WORC's energy future? A \$15 donation buys one solar cell for the new office building. Mail your contribution for one or more solar cells to WORC/Northern Plains Resource Council, 2401 Montana Avenue, Billings MT 59101.

History of Captive Supply Reform

As WORC enters its 15th year of the fight to stop captive supplies in the livestock markets, here is a reminder of where we've been and a glimpse into the next steps in making the Captive Supply Reform Act a reality.

1989 and 1990 — WORC collects 10,000 signatures on petitions demanding increased enforcement of antitrust laws in the meatpacking industry.

October 1991 — The General Accounting Office criticizes the Packers and Stockyards Administration (P&SA) for failing to respond adequately to increasing concentration in the meatpacking industry.

June 1994 — Members of Congress renew calls for investigation into antitrust violations in the meatpacking industry and suspicious trading in the cattle futures market, after cattle prices fell 16% in April and May and retail prices went up over the same period.

April 1995 — WORC asks Jim Baker, Administrator of the Federal Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), to intervene against the use of captive supplies by prohibiting direct packer feeding of cattle; prohibiting packers from formula pricing for forward-contracted slaughter supplies and requiring packers to make forward contracts for slaughter supplies on a firm bid price basis and to offer such contracts openly and publicly. This request was deemed the "WORC Rule."

April 1996 — Feeder calf prices plummet to 55 cents per pound.

October 12, 1996 — Dakota Rural Action Vice-Chair Ron Wieseler presents the WORC Petition for Rulemaking to Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman during Farm Aid in Columbia, South Carolina.

December 1996 — Over 100 state and national organizations endorse the WORC Rule.

January 14, 1997 — WORC's Rule was published in the Federal Register and open to public comment.

March 23, 1998 — In a grassroots campaign of calls, letters and e-mails, members succeed in stopping Glickman from rejecting WORC's proposal—resulting in an invitation to Washington, D.C. For the first time,

WORC was able to make its case directly to Secretary Glickman—who said he would not reject the proposal.

April 8, 1998 — Over 1,600 farmers and ranchers and WORC leaders gather in Aberdeen, South Dakota for a public forum with Secretary Glickman. Nearly everyone, including several of the Senators, wore yellow stickers stating "*IT'S TIME TO ACT—ADOPT THE WORC RULE.*"

October 1998 — Congress appropriates funds for GIPSA reorganization and more investigations.

July 9, 1999 — Over 1,000 protesters block trucks carrying agricultural products across the Canadian border—sending a message to Congress about the economic depression gripping rural communities and calling for a stop to the cartel of giant agri-business corporations manipulating commodity markets.

September 1999 — WORC members Shane Kolb and Helen Waller join hundreds of farmers and ranchers at the nation's capitol to call for a stop to the corporate control of agricultural markets.

Summer 2000 — Feeder calf prices average \$1.00 per pound. WORC reports that over half the fed cattle are procured by captive supplies—costing the cattle producers \$1 billion for fat cattle alone.

September 2000 — Ranchers, livestock feeders and consumers travel to Denver, CO to a forum to examine the use of captive supplies by the meatpacking industry. WORC member, Shane Kolb testified at the forum.

May 2005 — Senator Enzi (R-WY) introduces the Captive Supply Reform Act (S. 960) with Senators Dorgan (D-ND), Johnson (D-SD), Thomas (R-WY) and Conrad (D-ND)

November 2005 — Representative Pomeroy (D-ND) introduces the Captive Supply Reform Act (H.R. 4257) along with Representatives Cubin (R-WY) and Herseth (D-SD).

—Jeri Lynn Bakken

To read the full chronology of WORC's campaign on captive supply reform, visit www.worc.org

Viruses and Spyware

Computer tips from Tim the Tech Guy

Computer security is the #1 subject in the computer network industry today for a very good reason. Statistics show that a new unprotected personal computer has less than 20 minutes from the time it is connected to the internet before the computer's security will be compromised. Computer users must be responsible in making certain that virus protection is in place and updated, that programs and downloads are safe and from a reliable source.

Follow these guidelines to protect your computer against spyware and viruses.

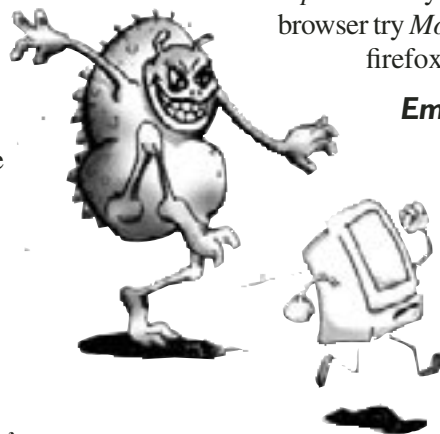
Firewalls

Install a firewall to prevent access of your computer from the outside world. *Windows XP* with *Service Pack 2* has a firewall. You just need to be sure it is turned on. To check, go to the "Control Panel" and open the "Security Center."

Viruses

Be certain you have antivirus software and that a subscription to an update services. If you have not purchased antivirus software or you have not purchased the update service, try the free *AVG Antivirus* (<http://free.grisoft.com>) for home computer use. *AVG* products include two years of updates in their price.

For commercial software, the leaders in antivirus and internet security are *Panda Platinum Internet Security*, *ZoneAlarm Security Suite 6.0*, *Trend Micro PC-cillin Internet Security*, *McAfee Internet Security Suite*, and *Norton Internet Security 2006*. These packages all contain antivirus and anti-spyware software as well as an internet firewall. They will provide one year of updates free and charge a yearly fee after that.



Spyware

Spyware is the newest problem to come into our computers from being on the internet. Pop-up ads that offer a button that say "Click here to close" can be a trap to install spyware. Always use the "X" in the upper right hand corner or hold the Alt key and press F4 to close a browser window. Before you install a web utility ask yourself some questions first: Where is this program coming from, who is offering it, and why are they offering it for free? Innocent sounding programs will open a door for all kinds of nasty, virus-like programs to come in without you knowing.

To clean up after an infestation of spyware you should use tools such as *Spybot-Search & Destroy 1.4* (www.safer-networking.org/en/download/) and *Ad-Aware SE Personal Edition 1.06* (www.lavasoftusa.com/software/adaware/). For best results, use both programs. Remember to update the programs before each use to ensure they remove the latest threats.

Web Browsers

Use an alternate web browser. *Internet Explorer* may work best on some websites but for a majority of your web browsing you could use an alternate web browser. Some web sites try to take advantage of *Internet Explorer's ActiveX* controls to run programs that are launched without you knowing it. Other web browsers do not support *ActiveX* and they cannot be tricked into starting programs. If you keep up with all of the patches that Microsoft offers, you should be safe with *Internet Explorer*. If you would like to use an alternate web browser try *Mozilla Firefox* (www.mozilla.org/products/firefox) or *Opera* (www.opera.com).

Email

If you receive an email with an attachment, think before you open it. Were you expecting this email? Do you know the person who sent it? Is opening it important to your work?

— Tim Ennis

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